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AGENT.
Israel J. Grahame, Baltimore.

From the "London Friend."

Some account of the Trials and Persecutions for Conscience' sake of Luke Howard of Dover. (He was born in 1621, died 1699, aged 78.)

There are many remarkable features in the life and character of Luke Howard, of deep instruction and encouragement to the seeking thirsty soul of the Christian traveller, which appear worthy of being drawn from the obscurity into which they have fallen, and preserved from oblivion. He became convinced in his own mind of one of the fundamental principles of the Society of Friends, the light of Christ in the conscience, the perceptible influence and guidance of the Holy Spirit, without having received any instruction from outward ministry, but in opposition to his former teachers, and before he had seen the face of any Friend, or knew of such a people. When, for the first time, he became briefly acquainted by an accidental circumstance as it were, with two gospel messengers of that Society, then their testimony responded to the previous convictions of his own mind, even as face answers to face in a glass, evincing that both were from the same Divine source. His life is also remarkable, as showing the gradual unfoldings of the truth in a mind ready and willing to receive it, so that he was graciously led onward, step by step, as he was able to bear it, experiencing the truth of that promise, "As thy day so shall thy strength be." As his obedience kept pace with knowledge, his spiritual strength increased, and he was willing to take up his daily cross, and follow Christ, in the way of his requirings, whether in things momentous or minute; as he was found faithful in a few things, more were given him to rule over. Arriving at the stature of a strong man in Christ, he was enabled to bear the loss of all things for his sake, and when brought to suffer for his cause, it is remarkable how he was supported under some of the severest trials which human nature has to endure, even resigning his wife and children whom he tenderly loved, and to forfeit his reputation among his former associates, and to bear the loss of liberty and of property, besides personal suffering from his persecutors, so that he might win Christ, and in the end obtain the reward of "Well done, good and faithful servant."

This history is not without interest also, in the glimpse which it gives into those stirring times of religious and political strife, when parties of different creeds and professions were fiercely contending with each other for pre-eminence in church and state; and as they severally succeeded to power by ejecting their predecessors, ALL persecuted Friends, who were the only people, as Cromwell remarked, that he could not bribe, for they never sought or accepted preferments, either in government or the church. * * * Luke Howard's father died when he was but eight years of age. His mother's second husband being a butcher by trade, Luke was brought up amongst those of that occupation until he was fourteen. Although, as he says, he became a companion in vanity with his playmates, yet there was something in his conscience that stirred against evil, which made him dislike a butcher's life and a butcher's trade. Being inclined to the business which his own father had followed, his mother procured him a place with a master shoemaker in Dover, to whom he was bound apprentice for seven years, which he faithfully served to his master's satisfaction. In the time of Luke's apprenticeship, his master began to make more conscience of religion than he had hitherto done, and went amongst those professors who had separated from the public worship, and were inquiring after a more living way than that which their teachers had taught them. The kindness and the example of Luke's master, wrought in him a resolution to be more circumspect in his life and conversation than he had heretofore been, with a desire to be upright in his conduct towards him, by a vigilant care to promote his master's interest. "I did not," says he, "dare to wrong my master of one penny in money or goods, which my fellow-prentices would do by giving to the journeman, but I would go to my mother and get what I had a mind to give them, making conscience of giving anything of my master's; and so in other things also, to the end of my seven years, which made my master kinder to me than he was bound by covenant.

Some time after his apprenticeship had expired, Luke went up to London to seek for work. Here he attended the ministry of John Goodwin, vicar of "St. Stephen," in Coleman Street, and was considered a member of that "church." It was about this period that King Charles I. and his parliament had commenced hostilities with each other, and active preparations were being made for prosecuting the contest with vigor on both sides. John Goodwin was a controversial writer both on doctrine and politics. He was deprived of his living for conscientiously refusing to administer those called sacraments promiscuously to all. Being a zealous republican, he promoted and defended by preaching and writing, the execution of the king, and because of his notoriety, he was exempted from the general pardon which was extended to others at the restoration; but it does not appear that he was proceeded against. Such is the character of the man whom the youthful and ardent Luke Howard had chosen for his counsellor, which will readily account for what follows. "At that time," he says, "the wars being very hot between king and parliament, and the forts about the city a-making, at which work I was employed, also troops of horse were raising, and my mind being earnest for the war, I took a horse at the Star, on Fish-street-hill, with an intent to go into the army; but by reason of so entering themselves and dressing to go, it fell my lot, as the Lord ordered it, to be left out, that I might be as I am, I bless the Lord, clear of the blood of all men. I have since seen it, and rejoice, though then troubled for my dismission of going into the war. Then I heard of horses raised at Dover, which made me speed down to get one there, but all being disposed of, I entered myself a soldier in Dover Castle. Here were several young men of us, inquiring the way to Sion with our faces thitherward, and we gave up our minds to search the scriptures, hoping to find the right way there. In that day was I convinced the singing of psalms in rhyme and metre was a lie in me, as to my own condition, and a mock service as to the Lord. Then was I forced to sit silent in the cross when others sung, so that the priest took notice of me and preached against me in his pulpit, but the more I was put to the search in myself, the more was I confirmed by the witness in my own conscience. In a little time it was noised about as a great wonder, that I refused to sing psalms, which troubled my old master that I had been apprenticed with so much that he got Samuel Fisher, a learned priest who held the "living" of Lydd in Kent, to come and discourse with me, and try to convince me of my error. We had an hour or two together, and he had much to say, and what was manifested in my own conscience I said to him, but I did not then know another of my mind in the world, but so it was, my peace abounded and knowledge increased. Samuel Fisher went home, but never more dared to sing with his people at their worship, as he afterwards told me when he came further to be convinced of the everlasting truth and gospel, in which he ended his days under the name of a Quaker. After this my faithfulness in a little, I was convinced of more, and the witness still followed me. To get peace was my great desire for which I run here and there, like the woman that had lost her piece of silver and knew not where to find it. So did I run after those called the best priests, among Brownists, Presbyterians and Independents, and then among the Baptists: with these my mind sooner joined than any other, in hopes of finding life and salvation in the doctrines which they then preached. So these things being by me comprehended, my care was to answer the witness in my own conscience, and thereby to get true and lasting peace. So being willing to be baptised, I got a letter of recommendation to the church in London, of which William Kiffin was pastor, and went up to be dipped. After my appearance before the church, a time was appointed, and I went very cheerfully from my lodgings in Coleman Street to the Neckinger, in Redriffe, and there was baptised by the aforesaid William Kiffin. This being in the Twelfth Month, there was ice in the water, yet my zeal was so great and my love to God so much, that I mattered not about having a fire, but presently dressed myself, took a wherry, and went up to my chamber in Coleman Street, with great joy, hoping that I had found Him whom my soul loved and sought for."